

# Reality returns after German elections

by Rainer Apel

The elections for national parliament in Germany on Oct. 16 seemed to confirm Chancellor Helmut Kohl's bid to run for another four-year term in command of the German government: His three-party coalition of Christian Democrats (CDU), Christian Social Union (CSU), and the liberal Free Democrats (FDP) defeated the three-party opposition of Social Democrats (SPD), Greens, and Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) by a margin of ten seats. This should suffice to form a new government based on the same three parties that backed the coalition government for three consecutive terms before—since October 1982.

The CDU gained 34.2% of the national vote, the CSU 7.3% and the FDP 6.9%; the SPD gained 36.4%, the Greens 7.3%, and the PDS 4.4%. Chancellor Kohl's three-party alliance won, therefore, only by a margin of 0.4%. This would have given Kohl no majority, or if at all, only a one-seat majority in the Bundestag, the national parliament, but the peculiarities of Germany's election laws prescribe that if a party wins at least three seats in direct voting in election districts, the seats are counted no matter what percentage the party may have gained nationally. For the CDU, this meant that it gained an extra 10 seats above those it gained by its share of national voter percentages; the SPD gained six additional seats by that rule. The PDS, the party of the former communists in East Germany, gained parliamentary status under the same rule, because it won four seats in Berlin, although it failed to cross the mandatory 5% hurdle, the minimum share of the national vote which the German election laws prescribe for any party receiving parliamentary status.

The 4.4% which the PDS won in the elections was therefore counted as if it were above 5%, and so, the party gained 30 seats in the Bundestag. This reflects, first of all, that the PDS is a broad-based, highly disciplined party cadre organization in Germany's east. And—unlike the other two minor parties in Germany's parliamentary establishment, the Greens and the FDP, which live on borrowed votes from the bigger parties—it is able to secure its seats in the Bundestag by the PDS candidate winning even over the "big" parties' candidates in several districts.

This also means that the PDS, a party with rabid ecologist, extreme anti-industrialist, and other subversive views, which act as a mouthpiece of the Germanophobe Anti-Defamation League and of certain Germanophobe circles in the foreign intelligence communities of Russia and Britain, will

have options to cause chaos and disruptions.

The PDS influence is increased beyond that role by the SPD, which, after the June 12 elections for state parliament in Saxe-Anhalt, showed no scruples in forming a minority coalition government with the Greens, based on support from the PDS against the CDU there. In another eastern state, Mecklenburg-Premomerania, which also held elections on Oct. 16, along with the national elections, the SPD is about to consider a minority government there as well with no coalition partner, but backed by the PDS, against the CDU. Socialist sentiments in large sections of the SPD have made that possible, and one may see very soon that this alliance will also come together in the Bundestag on a number of select issues.

## The economic challenge

The main, immediate challenge to Kohl is not the strength of the parliamentary opposition but rather the reality of the economic depression. The short-term effects of the depression have been bought off by the German government through tricks, such as the granting of special budget concessions to the farming sector and medium-sized industries, and tacit agreements with the banks and industry to postpone corporate bankruptcies and industrial mass layoffs (as they occurred this past spring), or large-scale turbulences on the monetary and stock markets of Germany, until after the October elections.

This "bribe" tactic collapsed days after the elections, when the DAX, the German stock market in Frankfurt, responded to leaks about major losses for the Volkswagen Corp. in derivatives trading operations and related problems for Deutsche Bank, and dropped by more than 4% in three days.

The chancellor could, naturally, march ahead with his 10-seat majority in the national parliament and launch an economic policy that moves against financial speculation and favors the creation of new jobs through corporate investments at low interest rates. This is an approach U.S. economist Lyndon H. LaRouche has recommended, and aspects of that have been voiced also by other politicians and institutions in Germany.

Kohl—no man of economic policy expertise himself—will, however, feel the pressure from the same banks and industrialists with whom he struck the "get me reelected, then we'll see" deal. Central Bank governor Hans Tietmeyer has already expressed the wish to see "more budgetary discipline" in the new government policy.

Should Kohl heed such calls, Germany will not be able to reduce the staggering jobless rate of more than 7 million citizens (out of 45 million Germans of working age) who don't have a job or at least regular employment. Continued mass unemployment, which is especially dramatic in the eastern regions of Germany, will offer the PDS a chance to agitate against Bonn.